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ABSTRACT

Telephone interviews were conducted with 901 adults to determine whether people who vote use libraries more than non-voters. Respondents were asked if they had visited a public library within six months of their interviews, or if they had read any part of a book borrowed from a public library within that time period. Area probability techniques were employed to select 300 counties within which to choose specific communities and households to interview. Controls were employed to ensure that the ages and sexes of participants properly represented the adult population. All other primary demographic factors were accounted for by the probability methods used. Results indicate that voters use libraries more than non-voters, that this pattern is true whether the individual had visited a public library or read a book borrowed from one, and that lighter voters tended to have visited a library less frequently than heavy voters. However, the proportions of light voters and heavy voters who had read a book from the library were the same. Tables of data are included. (Author/BK)

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LIBRARY AND VOTING

Prepared For The Orange Public Library
of Orange, New Jersey

June, 1980

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PROPERTY OF
THE ORANGE N.J. PUBLIC LIBRARY

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this survey was to determine whether people who vote use libraries more than non-voters.

Respondents were asked whether they had visited a public library within six months of their interview or whether they had read any part of a book borrowed from a public library within this period.

1. Voters use libraries more than non-voters. (See Table T-3.)

   Only 42% of non-voters either visited a public library or read a book borrowed from one in the six months before their interview. A 16-point higher 58% of voters had.

2. This pattern remains the same when visiting a public library and reading a book borrowed from one are looked at separately. (See Tables T-1, 2.)

   While 38% of non-voters report visiting a library in the six months before their interview, a 14-point higher 52% of voters do.

   Similarly, only 34% of non-voters report having read a book borrowed from a public library within six months of their interview, which 46% of voters have.

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted among a probability sample of 901 adults, 18 years of age and older, between May 15 and May 20, 1980.

Interviews were conducted by telephone, from the Seasonwein offices in New Rochelle, New York. Rigorous supervision was provided, with a ratio of one supervisor to five interviewers maintained throughout the survey. Interviewing was continuously monitored and questionnaires checked as completed.

The sample drawn for the survey is representative of the adult civilian population of the United States living in households. Persons living in institutions or group quarters were excluded.

Area probability techniques were employed in drawing the sample. The nation's 3,000 counties were stratified by Census Region and population. Then, some 300 counties were selected, using a propability procedure that gave each county a likelihood of falling into the sample in direct proportion to its adult (non-institutionalized) population.

Following the selection of these counties, the composition of the sample was validated against demographic factors such as household income, race and age.

After the completion of the validation of the sample, a "sampling frame" for each county was constructed, using all of the telephone books covering each county and eliminating all duplication between such books.

Specific households were selected on an "nth page" basis within each county, with no more than one household designated per page. Using this procedure, it is estimated that an average of one to two communities were selected in each of the 300 counties in the sample. Thus, interviewing was conducted in some 500 to 600 communities across the United States.

Interviewers, after contacting predesignated households, selected respondents in a predesignated manner, so that they exercised no personal judgment in the selection of those persons actually interviewed. Where necessary, callbacks to the predesignated households were made. A 71% cooperation rate among the primary households was obtained.

In cases where an interview could not be obtained in the pre-

designated household, alternate households were assigned to interviewers. These alternate households were selected randomly but in a manner so that their demographic characteristics closely approximated the demographics of the original household.

To insure the accuracy of the sample, all interviewing was done on weekday evenings or weekends. Further, controls were employed to insure the ages and sex of respondents properly represented the actual age and sex distribution of the adult population. Six age and sex quota categories were employed, using these age categories for each sex: 18-34, 35-54, and 55 and older. All other primary demographic factors, such as income, location, race, etc. were accounted for by the probability methods employed.

The wording of each question appears on each table reporting the results.

SAMPLING ERROR FOR INDIVIDUAL FIGURES AT THE 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL

	When percentages are closest to:			
	15 or 85%	25 or 75%	35 or 65%	50%
Total public	2.3	2.8	3.1	3.3
Non-voters	3.9	4.8	5.3	5.5
Total voters	2.9	3.5	3.9	4.1
Lighter voters	4.4	5.3	5.9	6.2
Heavier voters	3.9	4.8	5.3	5.5

TABLES

WHETHER RESPONDENT REPORTS HAVING VISITED A PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE SIX MONTHS BEFORE INTERVIEW

	Total Public	Non-Voters**	Voters		
			Total	Lighter***	Heavier****
Visited	47%	38%	52%	47%	56%
Have not	53	61	48	53	44
Don't know	*	1	-	-	-

Question: Within the past 6 months, have you visited a public library or have you not done this?

*Less than .5%

**Non-voters include those who report not being registered now or who are registered but report not voting in one or more national, state, or local elections since the November, 1976 election.

***Lighter voters are individuals who have voted in less than four elections since November, 1976.

****Heavier voters are individuals who have voted in more than three elections since November, 1976.

BASE: Listed above.

WHETHER RESPONDENT REPORTS HAVING READ A BOOK BORROWED FROM A PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE SIX MONTHS BEFORE INTERVIEW

	Total Public	Non-Voters**	Voters		
			Total	Lighter***	Heavier****
Read	42%	34%	46%	47%	47%
Have not	57	63	53	53	53
Don't know	1	3	*	*	*

Question: Within the past 6 months, have you read any part of a book borrowed from a public library or have you not done this?

*Less than .5%

**Non-voters include those who report not being registered now or who are registered but report not voting in one or more national, state, or local elections since the November, 1976 election.

***Lighter voters are individuals who have voted in less than four elections since November, 1976.

****Heavier voters are individuals who have voted in more than three elections since November, 1976.

BASE: Listed above.

WHETHER RESPONDENT REPORTS HAVING VISITED A PUBLIC LIBRARY OR READ A BOOK BORROWED FROM A PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE SIX MONTHS BEFORE INTERVIEW

	Total Public	Non-Voters**	Voters		
			Total	Lighter***	Heavier****
Have visited public library or read a book borrowed from a public library in the six months before interview	52%	42%	58%	56%	61%
Have not	48	58	42	44	39

Questions: Reported in T-1 and T-2.

**Non-voters include those who report not being registered now or who are registered but report not voting in one or more national, state, or local elections since the November, 1976 election.

***Lighter voters are individuals who have voted in less than four elections since November, 1976.

****Heavier voters are individuals who have voted in more than three elections since November, 1976.

BASE: Listed above.

WHETHER RESPONDENT IS REGISTERED AND, IF SO, VOTED IN ONE OR MORE ELECTIONS IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS

Registered, and	78%
Voted	65
Did not, don't know	13
Not registered, don't know	22

Questions: Are you registered to vote from the address at which you are now living?

Thinking about the past four years and including the November, 1976 election, did you happen to vote in one or more national, state or local government elections or primaries or did you not do this?

BASE: Total sample.

HOW MANY ELECTIONS RESPONDENT HAS REPORTED VOTING IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS

	Total Public	Total Voters
Three times or less	28%	43%
Four times or more	35	54
Don't know	2	3
Not asked because not registered to vote or did not report voting in the past four years	35	-

Question: In about how many elections have you voted in the past four years? Would it be closest to 1 or 2 or 3 or more than that?

BASE: Listed above.